

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 01530 071725Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----071738Z 058687 /41
O 071559Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2086

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 1530

STADIS//////////

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PFOR SY US
SUBJECT: SYRIAN JEWS

REF: (A) STATE 43671 (B) DAMASCUS 1470

1. DCM'S MARCH 6 MEETING WITH JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADER TOUTAH AND MAURICE NOSSEIRI BEGAN WITH EXCHANGE OF RESPECTIVE UNDERSTANDINGS ON CURRENT SYRIAN REGULATIONS GOVERNING CONDUCT OF COMMUNITY. SEVERAL DIFFERENCES EMERGED. TOUTAH CLEARLY REGARDS HIS MEETING WITH COS CHIHABI LAST NOVEMBER AND MEASURES CONVEYED ORALLY TO HIM BY SHIHABI AT THAT TIME AS MOST AUTHORITATIVE SYRIAN PRONOUNCEMENT REGARDING COMMUNITY. CERTAIN AMPLIFICATIONS OF THESE MEASURES HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN COMMUNICATED TO HIM BY MILITARY SECURITY OFFICIALS BUT HE HAS RECEIVED NO SUGGESTION THAT SARG READY TO SHOW GREATER LENIENCY TOWARD TRAVEL OF UNMARRIED SYRIAN JEWISH WOMEN. HE STATES THAT HE WAS NEVER OFFICIALLY INFORMED OF A JANUARY 10 DECREE AS SUCH. HE REMINDED DCM OF SHIHABI'S WARNINGS TO HIM, TOUTAH, THAT SYRIA WOULD NOT BEING CONTEMPLATED.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 DAMASC 01530 071725Z

2. TOUTAH'S ANSWERS, THEREFORE, TO QUESTIONS POSED BY REP. SOLARZ IN PARA ONE REFTEL WERE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR.

A. HE THOUGHT THAT A FOREIGNER WISHING TO MARRY A SYRIAN JEWISH WOMAN WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO COME TO SYRIA AND HAVE THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY PERFORMED HERE. THE COUPLE WOULD HAVE TO REGISTER THEIR MARRIAGE INTENT WITH THE OFFICE OF

CIVIL STATUS (AHWAAL MADANIYYEH) AND PRESENT PROOF OF REGISTRATION TO THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY PERFORMING THE MARRIAGE. AFTER THE MARRIAGE, THE WOMAN WOULD APPLY FOR A PASSPAORT TO DEPART WITH HER HUSBAND. TOUTAH IMAGINES THIS PROCESS COULD TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS. HE COMMENTED THAT HE WAS ABOUT TO INTERVENE IN A CASE INVOLVING AN IRANIAN JEW LIVING IN BEIRUT WHO WISHED TO MARRY A SYRIAN JEWISH WOMAN. HE SAID HE WOULD ASK THE MILITARY SECURITY AUTHORITIES TO ALLOW HER TO TRAVEL TO LEBANON ON HER SYRIAN I.D. CARD. HE WAS QUITE CONFIDENT THEY WOULD AGREE BUT THOUGHT THAT THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY WOULD HAVE TO BE PERFORMED IN DAMASCUS.

B. BASED ON TOUTAH'S COMMENTS ABOVE, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR A U.S. MALE CITIZEN TO TRAVEL TO SYRIA, MEET AND MARRY A JEWISH MAIDEN IN SYRIA IN ACCORDANCE WITH SYRIAN LAW AND DEPART WITH HIS NEW WIFE, SHE HAVING APPLIED FOR AND RECEIVED A SYRIAN PASSPORT AND EXIT VISA FOLLOWING THE MARRIAGE. ONLY A TEST CASE WILL TELL THE TIME ALL THIS WOULD INVOLVE.

C. WE CANNOT AT THIS POINT SAY WHETHER A FIANCEE PETITION UNDER US LAW WOULD BE OF ANY HELP TO A SYL

APPLYING FOR A PASSPORT IN ORDER TO TRAVEL TO THE US TO MARRY A US CITIZEN IN THE UNITED STATES. THERE HAS BEEN NO TEST CASE AND WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHETHER TRAVEL ABROAD SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS PURPOSE WILL BE PERMITTED.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DAMASC 01530 071725Z

D. TOUTAH SAID THE COMMUNITY WOULD BE HAPPY TO RECEIVE AN ELIGIBLE YOUNG MAN FROM THE US AND INTRODUCE HIM TO MARRIAGEABLE JEWISH WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES. HE SAID THAT JEWISH CUSTOM WAS FREER THAN MUSLIM CUSTOM IN ALLOWING YOUNG PEOPLE TO GO OUT TOGETHER AND GET ACQUAINTED. COMMENT: HOW MUCH FREER REMAINS TO BE SEEN.)

E. ON BONDS, TOUTAH SAID THAT THE IMPORTANT QUESTION WAS OBTAINING PERMISSION TO TRAVEL, NOT POSTING THE BOND. THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL HAD SOME EMERGENCY FUNDS WHICH COULD BE USED IN TRULY NEEDY CASES. HE WOULD NOT WANT IT TO BECOME KNOWN THAT US SOURCES WERE PREPARED TO ADVANCE OR REIMBURSE BOND MONEY SINCE EVERYONE TRAVELING WOULD THEN IMPORTUNE HIM FOR FUNDS. THE MORE IMPORTANT AREAS FOR ASSISTANCE, NOSSEIRI HERE INSERTED, WOULD BE IN HELPING POTENTIAL EMIGRANTS GET A NEW START IN THE STATES AND IN COMPENSATING THEM FOR THE ASSETS THEY HAD TO LEAVE BEHIND IN SYRIA.

3. DCM AGAIN URGED TOUTAH TO IDENTIFY TWO OR THREE UNMARRIED WOMEN WHO WOULD BE WILLING TO TRAVEL EITHER ALONE OR WITH ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER TO VISIT RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES. IF HE COULD GIVE US THE NAMES OF THESE POTENTIAL TRAVELERS AND THEIR US RELATIVES, WE (THE DEPARTMENT) COULD ASK THE US RELATIVES TO WRITE LETTERS INVITING THEM TO VISIT. THE EMBASSY AND HE COULD THEN STAY IN TOUCH REGARDING THE PROGRESS OF THEIR APPLICATIONS FOR PASSPORTS WITH THE IDEA THAT THE EMBASSY COULD HELP IF ANY DIFFICULTIES AROSE. TOUTAH DID NOT MAKE ANY SPECIFIC REPLY TO THIS PROPOSAL. HE DID COMMENT THAT THERE WERE A FEW WOMEN PAST THE NORMAL MARRYING AGE (OVER 25) WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN LEAVING SYRIA BUT HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THEY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN GOING TO THE UNITED STATES. HE SAID THAT THERE WERE ABOUT FIFTY TO ONE HUNDRED WOMEN IN THIS CATEGORY (INTERESTED IN MARRIAGE BUT BEYOND THE NORMAL MARRYING AGE IN SYRIA). SOME OF THEM MIGHT HAVE US RELATIVES.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 DAMASC 01530 071725Z

4. CONFIRMING OUR EARLIER CONVERSATION (REF B), TOUTAH SAID THAT FREE TRAVEL OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO JORDAN USING THEIR I.D. CARDS HAD BEEN HALTED TWO-THREE WEEKS AGO, ABOUT THE TIME THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAD BECOME AWARE OF THE ILLEGAL FLIGHT OF THREE YOUNG JEWISH MEN FROM SYRIA TO TURKEY. THERE WERE NOW 25-30 REQUESTS FOR AUTHORIZATION TO TRAVEL TO JORDAN PENDING WITH THE MILITARY SECURITY OFFICE. ONE AUTHORIZATION HAD BEEN GRANTED, TO A JEWISH BUSINESSMAN, AND HE HAD BEEN REQUIRED TO POST A 15,000 SYRIAN POUND BOND. IN ADDITION, THERE WERE ABOUT 30 APPLICATIONS FOR PASSPORTS PENDING, SOME DATING BACK A MONTH OR TWO. TOUTAH SAID THAT FOR THE PAST MONTH HE HAD AVOIDED VISITING COLONEL MESSAOUD, HEAD OF THE MILITARY SECURITY OFFICE FOR JEWISH COMMUNITY AFFAIRS, BECAUSE OF THE BOYS'S DEPARTURE.

5. DCM ASKED TOUTAH IF HE WOULD OBJECT TO OUR POINTING OUT TO SARG THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE A DISCREPANCY BETWEEN OUR UNDERSTANDING AND THE COMMUNITY'S REGARDING APPLICATION OF THE NEW REGULATIONS. HE URGED US NOT TO DO IT SINCE THEN AUTHORITIES WOULD KNOW HE HAD BEEN TALKING TO US. (OUR MEETINGS ARE STILL ARRANGED DISCREETLY WITHOUT USE OF TELEPHONE OR OFFICIAL CARS BY DCM DROPPING IN AT NOSSEIRI'S COPPER AND BRASS SHOP AND SETTING TIME TO MEET TOUTAH THERE.) UPON REFLECTION, TOUTAH SAID HE WOULD TRY TO FIND REASON TO CALL ON COLONEL MESSAOUD IN NEXT FEW DAYS TO SEE HOW LAND LAY.

6. DCM THEN INFORMED TOUTAH THAT WE EXPECTED SEVERAL VISITORS OVER NEXT TWO MONTHS WHO HOPED TO HAVE CONTACT WITH COMMUNITY. FIRST WOULD BE KULICK (IAI) WHO WISHED TO

ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES THIS COMING SATURDAY, THEN POSSIBLY
TWO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES
WISHING TO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR THE VISIT OF RABBI HECHT
AND A GROUP OF INTERESTED INTELLECTUALS LED BY PROFESSOR
GOTTHEIL. TOUTAH ASKED THAT WE CONTINUE, AS WE HAVE DONE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 05 DAMASC 01530 071725Z

IN PAST TO INFORM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALLY OF ALL
SUCH VISITORS SINCE OTHERWISE HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO
RECEIVE THEM. HE AND DCM AGREED TO MEET AGAIN MARCH 10.

7. COMMENT: IN CONSIDERING HOW TO HELP THE SYRIAN JEWISH
COMMUNITY, WE MAY ALL HAVE UNDERESTIMATED THE ADDITIONAL
COMPLICATION POSED BY THE MIXTURE OF NERVOUSNESS AND
INERTIA ON THE PART OF THE COMMUNITY'S LEADERSHIP AT BEING
ENCOURAGED TO BEAR THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES. THIS REINFORCES
MY BELIEF THAT THE FIRST ESSENTIAL IS TO GET HOLD OF A
FEW TEST CASES.
MURPHY

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: JEWS, COMMUNITY RELATIONS, MEETINGS, TRAVEL CONTROLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 07-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DAMASC01530
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770078-0046
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770387/aaaacysf.tel
Line Count: 193
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 305a81bc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Reference: 77 STATE 43671, 77 DAMASCUS 1470
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Jul-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3190004
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN JEWS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SY, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/305a81bc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009